

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 151050

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORC, PDEV, RQ, CU

SUBJECT: PUERTO RICO: CUBAN POSITION IN THE UN

REF: HAVANA 1551

1. DEPARTMENT FINDS CUBAN REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
ON HANDLING OF PUERTO RICAN ISSUE IN NEXT MEETING OF
COMMITTEE OF 24 QUITE INTERESTING. AS FAR AS WE ARE
AWARE, THIS IS THE FIRST SUCH APPROACH WE HAVE RECEIVED
FROM THE CUBANS ON THIS ISSUE, AT LEAST IN RECENT YEARS.

2. WE QUESTION WHETHER CUBANS WILL BE INTERESTED IN
AVOIDING RENEWED CONFRONTATION WITH US OVER THIS ISSUE.
HOWEVER, IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO MAKE CLEAR TO CUBANS
OUR DESIRE TO AVOID CONFRONTATION AS WELL AS TO ELIMINATE
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ANY MISUNDERSTANDING CUBANS MAY HARBOR REGARDING DEGREE
OF US OPPOSITION TO PROPOSAL THAT COMMITTEE OF 24 CLAIM
JURISDICTION OVER PUERTO RICO. CUBANS EVINced SOME
SURPRISE LAST AUGUST OVER STRENGTH OF US NEGATIVE RE-
ACTION TO THEIR PROPOSAL, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT OUR
RELATIVELY LOW-KEY LOBBYING CAMPAIGN PRIOR TO THE
COMMITTEE'S MEETING LAST YEAR EVEN THOUGH IT WAS EFFECTIVE

WITH OTHER UN MEMBERS MISLED THE CUBANS ON THIS POINT.
WE SHOULD NOT LEAVE ANY BASIS NOW FOR SIMILAR

MISUNDERSTANDING.

3. IN RESPONSE TO JIMENEZ' REQUEST, USINT SHOULD MAKE
FOLLOWING POINTS:

(A) GIVEN PRESENT STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US
AND CUBA, A RENEWED CONFRONTATION IN THE UN OVER THE
PUERTO RICAN ISSUE COULD ONLY SERVE FURTHER TO
COMPLICATE MATTERS. A CUBAN MOVE IN THE COMMITTEE OF
24 SEEKING APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION DECLARING PUERTO
RICO TO BE A US COLONY WOULD SERVE TO EMBITTER LARGE
SECTORS OF US PUBLIC OPINION AND WOULD MAKE MORE
DIFFICULT ANY EFFORTS AIMED AT THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR
BILATERAL RELATIONS. PRESSURES ARE MOUNTING IN THE
CONGRESS FOR STEPS AIMED AT FURTHER RESTRICTING
US-CUBAN RELATIONS. THE ADMINISTRATION IS STRONGLY
RESISTING THESE PRESSURES, BUT A RENEWED CUBAN EFFORT
ON PUERTO RICO IN THE UN WHICH WAS SEEN AS DIRECTLY
HOSTILE TO THE US COULD ONLY SERVE TO ENCOURAGE THESE
EFFORTS.

(B) THE US POSITION CONTINUES TO BE THAT THE STATUS
OF PUERTO RICO IS OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE UN
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AND PARTICULARLY OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE
COMMITTEE OF 24. OUR OPPOSITION TO THE COMMITTEE OF
24'S CONSIDERATION OF PUERTO RICO IS BASED ON THE
FACT THAT THE COMMITTEE HAS AUTHORITY ONLY TO CONSIDER
NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES AND NON-STRATEGIC TRUST
TERRITORIES. (FYI: DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZES THAT THIS
POSITION WAS SOMEWHAT UNDERCUT LAST YEAR BY THE
APPEARANCE OF POLITICALLY-PROMINENT PUERTO RICAN AD-
VOCATES OF BOTH STATEHOOD AND COMMONWEALTH WHO ARGUED
THAT PUERTO RICO'S STATUS IS INDEED COLONIAL AND
THAT THE COMMITTEE OF 24 SHOULD ASSERT ITS JURISDICTION.
END FYI)

(C) WE RECOGNIZE CUBA'S STRONG VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT
AND WE ARE NOT ASKING THAT YOU ABANDON YOUR SUPPORT
FOR PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE. WE WOULD CALL TO
CUBAN ATTENTION, HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT THE PRESIDENT
HAS EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT ANY STATUS
CHOSEN BY THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES, INCLUDING
INDEPENDENCE. THE GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO HAS CALLED
FOR A REFERENDUM AFTER THE NEXT ELECTION WITH IN-
DEPENDENCE AS A SPECIFIC OPTION. THE PRESIDENT'S

POSITION GIVES FULL EXPRESSION TO THE US GOVERNMENT'S
UNDERTAKING TO ALLOW THE PROCESS OF SELF-DETERMINATION
TO TAKE ITS COURSE WITHOUT ANY OUTSIDE INTERVENTION OR
PRESSURES.

(D) WE BELIEVE THAT CONTINUED CUBAN EFFORTS TO INVOLVE
THE COMMITTEE OF 24 IN THE PUERTO RICAN STATUS ISSUE
COULD ONLY SERVE TO COMPLICATE THE PROCESS UNDER WHICH
THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO CAN DETERMINE THEIR OWN
POLITICAL FUTURE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS IS IN
THE INTEREST OF EITHER THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO OR
CUBA.

(E) IN OUR VIEW, THE BEST WAY TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE
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WOULD BE AGAIN TO HAVE THE COMMITTEE OF 24 ADOPT A
PROCEDURAL RESOLUTION PUTTING OFF CONSIDERATION OF THE
ISSUE FOR ANOTHER YEAR. EVEN IF CUBA COULD NOT VOTE
FOR THIS RESOLUTION, WE HOPE CUBANS WILL KEEP IN
MIND THAT OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF 24 WILL BE
INFLUENCED IN THEIR VOTES BY THE MANNER IN WHICH THE
CUBAN DELEGATION HANDLES THIS ISSUE.

3. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN USINT HAVANA'S ASSESS-
MENT OF CUBAN MOTIVES IN RAISING THIS ISSUE WITH US
AND OF THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE CUBANS MIGHT BE INCLINED
TO ADOPT A SOMEWHAT LESS HOSTILE ATTITUDE ON PUERTO
RICO THIS TIME AROUND. CHRISTOPHER

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